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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 005894

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SUBJECT: UNAMI TO REDUCE STAFF IN AMMAN

REF: USUN 1592

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.5 (b), (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: According to Interim Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq (A/SRSG) Ross Mountain and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Malloch Brown, the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) plans to reduce its staff profile in Amman slightly for reasons of political perception, not security. The new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq will go to Baghdad with a small team, and will depend on the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) and multi-national forces (MNF) for "life support". Despite the planned reduction in staff, Amman will continue to host the bulk of the UN presence until the security situation improved significantly. These reductions affect less than a quarter of UNAMI staff and, therefore, are unlikely to have much impact, positive or negative, other than to UNAMI efficiency. End Summary.

UNAMI STAFF REDUCTION IN AMMAN

2. (C) Malloch Brown, in a July 11 meeting with chiefs of mission of donor states participating in the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI), said UNAMI planned to reduce its staff profile in Amman, from 274 to 224, for reasons of political perception, not security. According to Brown, Amman would continue to host the bulk of the UN presence. Brown said that Amman would remain the principal center as it was easiest to bring Iraqis to Jordan and a natural convergence point. However, there was a medium term political consideration which weighed in favor of some dispersal in the region.

3. (C) Brown worried that a large, conspicuous UN presence in Amman might become a source of friction among Iraqis and others in the region, critical that UN personnel were sitting around in Jordan and not doing much for Iraq. He said that to avoid getting too big, the election component would be placed in Kuwait and the infrastructure development unit in Cyprus. Though the initial Jordan reaction had been to express concern that this decision reflected fear about Jordanian security, Brown said there were no pressing security concerns in Jordan. He also said this was not a reaction to Iraqi pressure. The Iraqis preferred that all UN operations be set up there, but they recognize that Amman is the most viable place to do business.

NEW SRSG, SMALL TEAM TO BAGHDAD; PERMANENT OFFICES IN IRAQ

4. (C) Brown said the new SRSG (ref) would go to Baghdad with a small team of between 15-25 persons. The group would depend on the IIG and MNF for "life support" while there.

5. (C) According to Brown, if the security situation for UN personnel improved significantly, UNAMI would be able to set up permanent offices in Baghdad, Mosul and Irbil over the remainder of 2004. A Basra facility could open in late September and Irbil in November. UNAMI was still looking for a suitable Baghdad site, so it would probably be the end of the year before an office could be set up. He said that UNAMI would plan to have 260 international staff in Baghdad, and 65 each in Mosul and Irbil. As many of these people would be security personnel, the "substantive" staff would number 35-50 in Baghdad and 10-15 in Basra and Irbil each. He stressed that actual deployment of these numbers of personnel depended upon the threat directed toward them.

6. (C) Comment: These officials evaded questions about the specific number of personnel that would remain in Amman, but Charge noticed Ross Mountain had in hand a table reflecting a UNAMI staffing reduction from 274 to 224. We do not see this reduction as having any particular political impact, negative or positive, although it runs counter to a strong trend among Embassies, NGOs, contractors and others to locate substantive "back office" operations in Amman pending improved security in Iraq.

7. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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